

Finding of No Significant Impact

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

BUREAU OF RECLAMATION

MID-PACIFIC REGION

SACRAMENTO, CALIFORNIA

FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT

DELTA-MENDOTA CANAL/CALIFORNIA AQUEDUCT INTERTIE

Recommended: _____
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DELTA-MENDOTA CANAL/CALIFORNIA AQUEDUCT INTERTIE

The Mid-Pacific Regional Office of the Bureau of Reclamation (Reclamation) has found that the proposed Intertie is not a major federal action that will significantly affect the quality of the human environment and that an Environmental Impact Statement is therefore not required. This Finding of No Significant Impact is supported by the attached Environmental Assessment.

BACKGROUND

The Delta-Mendota Canal and California Aqueduct Intertie (Intertie) is a proposed action in the August 2000 CALFED Bay-Delta Program, Programmatic Record of Decision (ROD). The ROD recommended investigation of a number of interties and bypasses in the water system to improve Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta conveyance.

The Intertie consists of constructing and operating a pumping plant and pipeline connection between the Delta Mendota Canal (DMC) and the California Aqueduct. The Intertie would be used in a number of ways to achieve multiple benefits, including meeting current water supply demands, allowing for the maintenance and repair of the Central Valley Project (CVP) Delta export and conveyance facilities, and providing operational flexibility to respond to emergencies related to both the CVP and State Water Project (SWP).

PROPOSED ACTION

The project area is in an unincorporated area of the San Joaquin Valley in Alameda County, west of the city of Tracy. The site is in a rural area zoned for general agriculture and is under federal and state ownership. The Intertie would be located at milepost 7.2 of the DMC, connecting with milepost 9.1 of the California Aqueduct, where they are approximately 500 feet apart.

The Intertie would include a 450-cfs pumping plant at the DMC that would allow up to 400 cfs to be pumped from the DMC to the California Aqueduct through an underground pipeline. Because the aqueduct is located approximately 50 feet higher in elevation than the DMC, up to 900 cfs flow could be conveyed from the aqueduct to the DMC using gravity flow.

The Intertie would be owned by the Federal Government and operated by the San Luis Delta Mendota Water Authority (Authority). An agreement among Reclamation, the California Department of Water Resources, and the Authority would identify the responsibilities and procedures for operating the Intertie. A permanent easement would be obtained by Reclamation where the Intertie alignment crosses state property.

Construction of the intake structure on the DMC and the outlet structure on the California Aqueduct would likely require lowering the water surfaces of both canals. To minimize impacts on water deliveries, these drawdowns would be timed to occur during periods of lower demand and would be limited in duration. Construction of appropriate detours through the worksites would maintain access to the DMC and California Aqueduct for operations and maintenance staff. Relatively deep excavations would be required at the DMC intake site and the California Aqueduct outlet site. Shoring of the excavation sideslopes would be accomplished using sheet piling. A dewatering system consisting of shallow wells would be installed outside the perimeter of the sheet piling. These measures would ensure the stability of the excavation and allow construction to proceed in dry conditions.

Excavated material not reused in permanent construction would be disposed of in spoilbanks in the federal and state right-of-way land between the two canals. The new spoilbanks would be placed adjacent to the existing spoilbanks and canal embankments within 2,600 feet of their point of origin. No material would be hauled or disposed of outside the right-of-way.

Temporary staging and stockpile areas would be required to store construction equipment and other construction-related material. Typical construction equipment would include road graders, bulldozers, scrapers, hydraulic excavators, compactors, dump trucks, concrete trucks, cranes, and power augers. Construction materials would include contractor offices and various support facilities; pipe, pumps, valves, and other permanent machinery and equipment; temporary equipment such as dewatering systems; and imported earth materials such as gravel and asphalt. The staging and stockpile areas would be located in flat areas along the federal right-of-way on both the sides of the canal. Areas disturbed by construction activities would be restored by grading and revegetation after construction is complete. During construction these areas would be controlled using best management practices to minimize potential temporary effects.

Activities that Reclamation will undertake to minimize potential construction effects consist of the following:

- Implementing an erosion and sediment control plan to control short-term and long-term erosion and sedimentation effects and to restore soils and vegetation in areas affected by construction activities.
- Developing and implementing a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan.
- Implementing control measures for construction emissions of PM₁₀, as identified by the Bay Area Air Quality Management District.
- Employing noise-reducing construction practices.
- Conducting pre-construction surveys for the San Joaquin kit fox, Western burrowing owl, and California red-legged frog.
- Implementing avoidance measures including silt fencing around wetland areas and establishing a 50-foot buffer zone around wetland areas for the red-legged frog.

FINDINGS

The Environmental Assessment evaluated the potential impacts associated with the Proposed Action. Reclamation has found that the proposed action would not result in any significant impacts to the quality of the human environment. This finding is supported by the following factors:

- 1) There will not be any significant impacts from erosion. The best management practices included as part of the project's sediment and erosion control plan will minimize any potential effects.
- 2) There will not be any significant impacts to water resources. The project included development of a Storm Water Pollution Prevention Plan. Implementation of this plan will ensure that impacts to water quality during construction are minimal.
- 3) Reclamation has coordinated with the Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) and has incorporated measures to minimize effects to vegetation and wildlife as discussed in their February 3, 2003, Planning Aid Memorandum. As a result, there will not be any significant impact to vegetation and wildlife.
- 4) Threatened and Endangered Species. Reclamation is consulting with the Fish & Wildlife Service as to the terrestrial aspects of the proposed action. Reclamation believes the action will have no significant effect on listed terrestrial species. Operational aspects of this activity are being addressed in the ongoing CVP-OCAP consultation. There would be no operational effect beyond these addressed in the consultation. Any discrete operational-related effects of the Intertie are expected to be insignificant.
- 5) No significant impacts to fisheries have been identified. The operational effects on aquatic resources are included in the ongoing consultation for the Operations Criteria and Plan. Biological opinions from the Service and NOAA Fisheries are expected by September 2004.
- 6) The project will not result in any significant impacts to air quality. The proposed action includes control measures to minimize short-term increases in PM10 emissions. These control measures include watering construction areas at least twice daily; covering all trucks hauling soil, sand, and other loose materials; sweeping all paved areas; limiting traffic speeds on unpaved roads to 15 miles per hour; and revegetating disturbed areas as quickly as possible.
- 7) Noise-reducing construction practices will be employed whenever construction is conducted between 7:00 p.m. and 7:00 a.m., Monday through Friday, and between 5:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m., Saturday and Sunday. These can include: limiting hours of construction, locating equipment as far as possible from noise-sensitive uses, using sound control devices such as mufflers on equipment, using haul routes that affect the fewest people, using noise barriers or noise-reducing enclosures around noise-generating

equipment, or temporarily relocating residents if noise cannot be reduced by other means. Noise impacts will not be significant.

8) Operation of the Intertie will have a minimal increase in power consumption. At less than two percent, the power impact of the Intertie is insignificant as a percentage of the overall level of CVP power production and consumption.

9) Prior to undertaking any irreversible actions (i.e., demolitions, excavations) that could affect historic properties, Reclamation will complete the Section 106 compliance process for the national Historic Preservation Act. Reclamation has determined that the site is unlikely to contain buried archaeological sites or human remains. In the unlikely event that cultural resources are encountered after the project has begun, the procedures in 36 CFR 800.11 will be followed. The contractor would cease work at the location and notify Reclamation. Reclamation's Regional Archaeologist would assess the nature and value of the site and would recommend to the State Historic Preservation Officer a course of action. Appropriate mitigation, as determined through negotiations with the State Historic Preservation Officer, would be completed for any significant sites.

10) The Intertie will not disproportionately affect minority or low-income populations and communities.

11) The Intertie will not affect any Indian Trust Assets.

12) The Intertie will not have any Growth-Inducing Effects.